

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2022

Statement on the 101st Anniversary of the Tulsa Race Massacre in Tulsa, Oklahoma
June 1, 2022

Last year, on this day, I traveled to Tulsa, Oklahoma, to tell a story that for too long was shrouded in silence in our history books. I had the honor of meeting with Mother Randle, Mother Fletcher, and Mr. Van Ellis, who were all just children 101 years ago when their thriving neighborhood of Greenwood was raided, firebombed, and destroyed by a violent white supremacist mob.

Today we remember the hell that was unleashed that night. This was not a riot, it was a massacre. As many as 300 Black Americans were killed, and nearly 10,000 were left destitute. Homes, businesses, and churches were burned. A generation of Black wealth was extinguished. In the years that followed, even as Greenwood worked to rebuild, discrimination was systematically embedded in our laws and policies, locking Black residents out of opportunity and ensuring that the attack on Black families and Black wealth persisted across generations.

I went to Greenwood—the first President to visit since the massacre—to help fill the silence. Because in silence, wounds deepen. In Greenwood, I called on all of us to reflect on the deep roots of domestic terrorism and hate in our Nation and to recommit to combating systemic racism across our country and institutions. As part of that work, I announced two expanded efforts to help communities like Greenwood build wealth, an aggressive effort to combat racial discrimination in housing, and a bold commitment to increase the share of Federal contracts going to small, disadvantaged businesses, including Black- and Brown-owned small businesses, by 50 percent by 2025.

In the last year, my administration has announced more than 20 actions from Federal agencies to root out bias in home appraisals. We've strengthened lending programs that help address the corrosive impacts of redlining and other forms of discrimination that have extracted wealth from Black neighborhoods. We have also made significant progress to ensure we deliver on our promise to use the power of Federal procurement to expand business opportunities for small disadvantaged businesses, including Black-owned businesses. That work—and all of our efforts to build wealth and opportunity for communities like Greenwood—continues.

We cannot bury pain and trauma forever. As I said in Tulsa, great nations do not hide from their histories. We are a great nation, and by reckoning with and remedying the injustices of the past, America will become greater still.

NOTE: The statement referred to Lessie Benningfield Randle, Viola Fletcher, and Hughes Van Ellis, centenarian survivors of the Tulsa massacre.

Categories: Statements by the President : Tulsa Race Massacre in Tulsa, OK, 101st anniversary.

Names: Fletcher, Viola; Randle, Lessie Benningfield; Van Ellis, Hughes.

Subjects: Business and industry : Small businesses, promotion efforts; Housing : Black homeownership rates, improvement efforts; Law enforcement and crime : Domestic terrorism and extremist violence, efforts to combat; Oklahoma : 1921 race massacre in Tulsa, 101st anniversary.

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